

Application No. 09/882,185  
Response to Office Action

Customer No. 01933

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-15 (Canceled).

16. (New) A ciphering apparatus comprising:

a blocking section which divides plaintext into blocks;

a sub-blocking section which divides at least one of the  
5 blocks into sub-blocks;

a block attribute setting section which sets a ciphering  
attribute for each of the blocks for use in ciphering;

a sub-block attribute setting section which sets a sub  
ciphering attribute for each of the sub-blocks for use in  
10 ciphering;

a sub-block ciphering section which ciphers data of each of  
the sub-blocks in accordance with the corresponding sub ciphering  
attribute set by the sub-block attribute setting section;

a block ciphering section which ciphers the at least one  
15 block that includes the ciphered data of the sub-blocks in  
accordance with the ciphering attribute corresponding to the  
block set by the block attribute setting section.

17. (New) A ciphering method comprising:

dividing plaintext into blocks;

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dividing at least one of the blocks into sub-blocks;  
setting a ciphering attribute for each of the blocks for use  
5 in ciphering;  
setting a sub ciphering attribute for each of the sub-blocks  
for use in ciphering;  
ciphering data of each of the sub-blocks in accordance with  
the corresponding set sub ciphering attribute; and  
10 ciphering the at least one block that includes the ciphered  
data of the sub-blocks in accordance with the set ciphering  
attribute corresponding to the block.

18. (New) A recording medium having recorded thereon a  
program for causing a computer to function as a ciphering  
apparatus, the program including a program code executable by the  
computer to cause the computer to carry out:

5 dividing plaintext into blocks;  
dividing at least one of the blocks into sub-blocks;  
setting a ciphering attribute for each of the blocks for use  
in ciphering;  
setting a sub ciphering attribute for each of the sub-blocks  
10 for use in ciphering;  
ciphering data of each of the sub-blocks in accordance with  
the corresponding set sub ciphering attribute; and

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15      ciphering the at least one block that includes the ciphered  
data of the sub-blocks in accordance with the set ciphering  
attribute corresponding to the block.